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Revealed History as Prophetic Rivalry: John's Apocalypse, the Sibylline Oracles, and the Prophecy of Apollo

Olivia Stewart Lester
Loyola University Chicago, ostewartlester@luc.edu

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In Auseinandersetzung mit der Forderung von Stephan Palmié, Charles Stewart und Dipesh Chakrabarty, das Verständnis von „Geschichte" auf die Intervention von Göttern, Geistern oder übermenschlichen Wesen auszuweiten, beschäftigt sich der vorliegende Artikel mit zwei antiken Texten, Offb 12 und Sib 4, die anhand göttlicher Offenbarung über die Vergangenheit sprechen. Diese beiden Texte stellen die Vergangenheit so dar, dass sie mit ihren rhetorischen Mitteln zumindest potentiell die Prophezeiungen des Apollon infrage stellen. Sie berufen sich dabei auf bestimmte Traditionen, die mit Apollon verbunden sind – insbesondere auf den Gründungsmythos des Schreins von Delphi und die Legenden über die Inspiration der Sibyllen durch Apollon –, und stellen ihnen alternative Geschichtsdeutungen gegenüber. Sie schreiben die Vergangenheit um und brechen auf diese Weise die Grundlagen der prophetischen Autorität Apollons auf. Mit Robert G. Hall lässt sich sagen, dass Offb 12 und Sib 4 bei diesem Verfahren die rhetorische Strategie der „geoffenbarten Geschichte" nutzen. In der prophetischen Rivalität mit Apollon eröffnet dies die Möglichkeit, sowohl die antiken Traditionen dieses Gottes als auch seine Zuverlässigkeit als Quelle der Erkenntnis über die Vergangenheit in Zweifel zu ziehen.

Keywords: Revelation, Sibylline Oracles, prophecy, Apollo, Delphic oracle, combat myth, historicism, revealed history

1 Introduction[1]

In a recent article, Stephan Palmié and Charles Stewart call for "an anthropology of history"[2] that encompasses ways of speaking about the past often excluded by "the Western concept of history (historicism)."[3] Such

1 I am grateful to the organizers of "The Sense(s) of History: Ancient Apocalypses and Their Temporalities" conference, Giovanni B. Bazzana and Paul J. Kosmin, for the invitation to participate in the original conference and in this journal volume. I am also grateful to all who attended the conference for helpful feedback and conversation.

2 S. Palmié and C. Stewart, "Introduction: For an Anthropology of History," *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 6 (2016), 207–236.

3 Palmié and Stewart, "Introduction" (see n. 2), 207. Palmié and Stewart draw on the work of Georg Iggers and Dipesh Chakrabarty for their understanding of historicism (ibid., 210

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excluded accounts about the past include "historical knowledge derived not from diligent and painstaking research and reconstruction but through revelation, mantic technique, oneiric, prophetic, or otherwise 'inspired' (instead of rationally contrived) forms of knowledge production."[4] Palmié and Stewart have in mind here both ancient and modern instances of history, as they compare revelatory dreams in the nineteenth century on the island of Naxos in Greece with dreams in the book of Revelation.[5]

Palmié and Stewart resonate with the critique of historicism articulated by Dipesh Chakrabarty, who argues that history must be reconceptualized beyond singular, secular, linear, Eurocentric political narratives.[6] Part of reconceptualizing history for Chakrabarty also entails adopting a new understanding of how humans relate to superhuman beings:

> The second assumption running through modern European political thought and the social sciences is that the human is ontologically singular, that gods and spirits are in the end "social facts," that the social somehow exists prior to them. I try, on the other hand, to think without the assumption of even a logical priority of the social. One empirically knows of no society in which humans have existed without gods and spirits accompanying them. Although the God of monotheism may have taken a few knocks – if not actually "died" – in the nineteenth-century European story of the "disenchantment of the world," the gods and other agents inhabiting practices of so-called "superstition" have never died anywhere. I take gods and spirits to be existentially coeval with the human, and think from the assumption that the question of being human involves the question of being with gods and spirits.[7]

Chakrabarty's description of the universality of gods and/or spirits in human societies casts an expansive vision for appreciating history-making throughout time, as well as for classifying modern accounts about the past. Indeed, Chakrabarty celebrates the adoption of his work by Amy Hollywood for understanding religious historiography among Christian women in the Middle Ages.[8]

In this article, I will take up Palmié, Stewart, and Chakrabarty's call for an expansive conception of history by considering two ancient examples of texts that present knowledge about the past as derived from divine reve-

n. 5). See G. Iggers, "Historicism: The Meaning of the Term," *JHI* 56 (1995), 129–152; D. Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, 2nd ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008).

4 Palmié and Stewart, "Introduction" (see n. 2), 213.

5 Palmié and Stewart, "Introduction" (see n. 2), 213–214.

6 Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe* (see n. 3).

7 Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe* (see n. 3), 28.

8 A. Hollywood, "Gender, Agency, and the Divine in Religious Historiography," *JR* 84.4 (2004), 514–528; Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe* (see n. 3), 14.

lation: Rev 12 and Sib. Or. 4. I have argued at length elsewhere that Revelation and portions of the Sibylline Oracles engage in rivalry with Apollo's prophecy, directly and indirectly.[9] In this article, I will first briefly review my argument that each text lays claim to traditions associated with Apollo – specifically, the foundation myth for the shrine at Delphi and legends about Apollo inspiring sibyls – in a way that has rhetorical potential to cast aspersions on the prophecy of Apollo.

I will then suggest that the category of "revealed history" is fruitful for understanding the ways that Revelation and Sib. Or. 4 transform traditions previously associated with Apollo, calling the legitimacy of his prophecy into question for informed audiences. By laying claim to these particular traditions, Revelation and Sib. Or. 4 advance alternate accounts about the past to the ones associated with Apollo's prophecy in texts and material culture. I take these accounts about the past that present themselves as the result of divine revelation as instances of "revealed history," even as the texts integrate what we might call "history" and "myth." In this analysis, I will return to the call for an expansive definition of history, inclusive of divine involvement, issued by Palmié, Stewart, and Chakrabarty. I will also draw on the research of Robert G. Hall, who modeled how to take divinely revealed history-making seriously within the context of biblical studies almost thirty years ago, in a 1991 monograph entitled *Revealed Histories: Techniques for Ancient Jewish and Christian Historiography*.[10] Hall surveys a range of Jewish and Christian texts that present the past as revealed by a god or messenger, arguing that revealed history was rhetorically useful for persuasion throughout the ancient Mediterranean and Mesopotamia.[11] More specifically, Hall argues that claims to revealed history were useful for communicating judgment and/or exhortation, asserting divine omnipotence and the order of the universe, and justifying interpretations of earlier texts, among other purposes.[12]

For all of the different purposes of revealed history that Hall discusses, my analysis of Revelation and Sib. Or. 4 together suggests one more: prophetic rivalry. The fourth section of this article will consider the rhe-

9 O. Stewart Lester, *Prophetic Rivalry, Gender, and Economics: A Study in Revelation and Sibylline Oracles 4–5*, WUNT 2/466 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018).

10 R.G. Hall, *Revealed Histories: Techniques for Ancient Jewish and Christian Historiography*, JSPSup 6 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991). Hall analyzes Sib. Or. 3–5 (ibid., 107–115), but not the book of Revelation, which in his estimation "skirt[s] the boundaries of revealed history" (126). I will discuss Hall's reasons for excluding Revelation from a study of revealed history – and my reasons for including it – further below.

11 Hall, *Revealed Histories* (see n. 10), 12.

12 Hall, *Revealed Histories* (see n. 10), 116–117.

torical usefulness of revealed history for prophetic rivalry with respect to Revelation and Sib. Or. 4. In my reading, the contributions of revealed history to prophetic rivalry with Apollo are two-fold. First, for the understanding audience member, each text rhetorically counters a more ancient tradition associated with Apollo. The second contribution of revealed history to prophetic rivalry that I propose is more tentative, but I suggest the possibility that Revelation and Sib. Or. 4 could rhetorically undermine not just the specific traditions associated with Apollo's prophecy (slaying Python, inspiring sibyls), but the legitimacy of Apollo's prophecy to speak to the past at all. As Revelation and the Sibylline Oracles lay claim to traditions associated with Apollo, they rewrite the ancient past, loosening the underpinnings of Apollo's prophetic authority. A focus on revealed history in Revelation and Sib. Or. 4 illuminates how frequently other ancient Mediterranean and ancient Near Eastern prophetic texts and traditions speak to the past.[13] The oracles of Apollo at Delphi were no exception,[14] and it is this fact that creates the possibility for a longer rhetorical reach of Revelation's combat myth and the anti-Apollo sibyl of Sib. Or. 4.

My analysis of Rev 12 and Sib. Or. 4, informed by Palmié, Stewart, Chakrabarty, and Hall, concludes that written prophecy functions in these texts as an alternative practice of historicizing. When Rev 12 and Sib. Or. 4 transform earlier traditions about Apollo, revealed history becomes rhetorically useful for prophetic rivalry.

2 Revelation and the Prophecy of Apollo

First, then, both Revelation and the Sibylline Oracles subvert traditions about Apollo's prophecy. In Revelation, this subversion results from John's

13 Among many sources, see P.J. Kosmin, *Time and Its Adversaries in the Seleucid Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2018), esp. 105–186; M. Neujahr, *Predicting the Past in the Ancient Near East: Mantic Historiography in Ancient Mesopotamia, Judah, and the Mediterranean World*, BJS 354 (Providence, R.I.: Brown Judaic Studies, 2012); Hall, *Revealed Histories* (see n. 10); J.J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998); R. Parker, "Greek States and Greek Oracles," *History of Political Thought* 6.1–2 (1985), 298–326.

14 See J. Fontenrose, *The Delphic Oracle: Its Responses and Operations with a Catalogue of Responses* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 17–18, and discussion below.

reworking of a combat myth in chapter 12.[15] A combat myth is a narrative unit with the following basic structure, according to Joseph Fontenrose: a god is assailed by enemies, who desire to overthrow the god or prevent the god from ruling. These enemies are often presented as monsters or demons and associated with chaos. For a time, the god's enemies have success; the god dies, and the enemies reign in the god's stead, causing further chaos and destruction. Eventually, someone comes to the aid of the god, such as a wife, sister, mother, or son. The god returns from the dead, conquers their enemies, and restores order.[16] Combat myths are found in Akkadian, Hittite, Ugaritic, Egyptian, Greek, and Jewish texts.[17]

Fontenrose notes that within Greek and Latin texts, different versions of a combat myth that centered on Apollo slaying a dragon or serpent circulated widely.[18] Over time, Apollo's enemy in these stories became identified as a dragon named Python.[19] Fontenrose traces different iterations of this story regarding Apollo's fight with Python, grouping them into five versions: (1) the Homeric Hymn to Apollo; (2) Simonides, Apollodorus, Aelian, and Ovid; (3) Euripides, Clearchus, and numerous artistic versions; (4) Lucan, Lucian, and Hyginus; (5) Ephorus and Pausanias.[20]

Although there are plot variations across these different versions, the combat between Apollo and Python always takes place at Delphi. There were certainly other shrines of Apollo, and some of those shrines also had connections with the Apollo-Python myth, but as Fontenrose writes, "Delphi clearly became the peninsular center about which the Python myth and its cognates clustered."[21] The story of Apollo slaying a dragon first appears in the Homeric Hymn to Apollo,[22] and in the context of the hymn, the myth serves as an origin story for the founding of the shrine at Delphi. Herbert Parke has argued that in this origin story, the hymn may already be engaging in shrine rivalry with Zeus's shrine at Dodona, asserting the

15 The extended version of this argument appears in Stewart Lester, *Prophetic Rivalry* (see n. 9), 105–115. For analysis of Rev 12 and the combat myth, see A. Yarbro Collins, *The Combat Myth in the Book of Revelation*, HDR 9 (Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1976; repr., Eugene, Oreg.: Wipf & Stock, 2001).

16 J. Fontenrose, *Python: A Study of Delphic Myth and Its Origins* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1959), 262–264; Yarbro Collins, *Combat Myth* (see n. 15), 59–60.

17 Yarbro Collins, *Combat Myth* (see n. 15), 58, 61–63.

18 Fontenrose, *Python* (see n. 16).

19 Fontenrose, *Python* (see n. 16), 15.

20 Fontenrose, *Python* (see n. 16), 21.

21 Fontenrose, *Python* (see n. 16), 68–69.

22 Fontenrose, *Python* (see n. 16), 13.

superiority of Delphi by describing Apollo as Zeus's beloved son and chosen prophet.[23]

Adela Yarbro Collins has argued that the pattern of the combat myth maps onto Rev 12, with its (1) dragon attacking a woman in childbirth, (2) the birth of the child, a hero, who is taken up to heaven, and, after the dragon loses the war in heaven, (3) divine help for the threatened woman, who is given two wings on which to flee to her place in the desert, where she will be fed.[24] More specifically, Yarbro Collins has also argued that John's use of the myth shares the most features with Fontenrose's fourth version of the Python combat myth, attested in Lucan, Lucian, and Hyginus.[25] Yarbro Collins proposes that John intentionally drew on the Python-Leto-Apollo version of the combat myth in order to use Apollo traditions against Rome, and particularly against Nero. She notes that Nero presented himself as a kind of Apollo, and argues that this would have made connections between Apollo and Nero more likely for ancient audiences.[26] Resonances between Apollo traditions and John's use of the combat myth would have made for an appealing and potentially effective political polemic, which is the major interest of the book of Revelation.

For audiences who caught the resonances between the Apollo-Python combat myth and Rev 12, I suggest an additional rhetorical function: undermining Delphic prophecy.[27] As I mentioned above, Delphi was the site of the combat in all of Fontenrose's versions. The story of the combat often included Apollo founding or taking over the shrine at Delphi, and in

23 H.W. Parke, *Greek Oracles* (London: Hutchinson University Library, 1967), 38.

24 Yarbro Collins, *Combat Myth* (see n. 15), 65–67.

25 Yarbro Collins, *Combat Myth* (see n. 15), 65–67.

26 Yarbro Collins, *Combat Myth* (see n. 15), 189–190. Nero created several associations between himself and Apollo; one example can be found in his musical attempts. Dio Cassius relates that Nero gathered a group of soldiers to applaud his poor singing at the Iuvenalia festival. These soldiers hailed Nero as Apollo (Dio Cassius 62.20; cf. Yarbro Collins, op. cit., 189).

27 Allen Kerkeslager argues this in his "Apollo, Greco-Roman Prophecy, and the Rider on the White Horse in Rev 6:2," *JBL* 112.1 (1993), 116–121, at 120–121. While I have benefited from Kerkeslager's article, my argument is slightly different. Kerkeslager writes that Apollo's "activity as the god who inspired prophecy is ubiquitous" (119). He also contrasts the "counterpoint between Apollo as the reputed inspiration behind pagan prophecy and Christ as the divine author of Christian prophecy" (120). I do not see John's reworked combat myth as an offensive against pagan prophecy writ large, as there were other deities with oracular shrine sites (e.g., Zeus at Dodona), and indeed other shrines of Apollo (Claros, Delos, Didyma). With Kerkeslager, I read Rev 12 as having the rhetorical capacity to counter Apollo's prophecy, especially traditions about Delphi. In contrast to Kerkeslager, I do not take Apollo's prophecy at Delphi as a stand-in for pagan prophecy. I also do not find as many references to Apollo in Revelation as Kerkeslager does (e.g., the Nicolaitans in Rev 2–3, cf. Kerkeslager, op. cit., 120–121).

its first preserved instance, that of the Homeric Hymn to Apollo, the myth functioned to assert the prestige of the shrine at Delphi. Traditions about Delphi and the combat myth traveled widely through time and space in the ancient Mediterranean. Fontenrose's fourth version, to which Yarbro Collins asserts Rev 12 bears the most resemblance, is found in Lucan, Lucian, and Hyginus, texts from the first and second centuries CE.[28] Geographically, knowledge of the Apollo-Python combat at Delphi is widely attested. Yarbro Collins has gathered references to the myth in western Asian Minor, in texts, inscriptions, coins and rituals.[29] Elsewhere, just to give a sampling, knowledge of the myth appears in the third century BCE in Alexandria (Callimachus), in the first century BCE or CE in Pontus (Strabo), and in the first century CE in Rome (Lucan).[30] Because of Delphi's elevated prestige and its significance in so many iterations of the myth of Apollo and Python, I argue that John's reworked combat myth had the rhetorical potential to undercut Apollo's prophecy from Delphi.

In this, I make a claim about the rhetorical possibilities of hearing a prophetic polemic in Rev 12 for ancient audience members who had encountered the combat myth elsewhere. This is not an argument about authorial intent, or about the way that every ancient audience member would have heard or read the text. In contrast to other iterations of the Apollo-Python myth that connected the slaying of the dragon with the establishment of the shrine, especially versions that claimed prominence for Delphi (e.g., the Homeric Hymn), John's reworked myth would undermine this narrative by re-assigning the hero status to Jesus.

The likelihood of this rhetorical effect is strengthened by considering the larger literary context of the book, John's location on Patmos, and a possible mention of Apollo elsewhere in Revelation. Hearing overtones of Apollo's prophecy in Rev 12 would resonate with the larger book of Revelation, which forcefully demarcates true and false prophecy. Compare, for example, John's presentation of his own prophecy as authoritative (Rev 1:3; 22:18–19) and his self-presentation as a prophet (Rev 1:9–20; 10:11; 22:9) with his treatment of figures who represent false prophecy, such as

28 Lucan and Hyginus (1st cent. CE); Lucian (2nd cent. CE). Not all of these sources are favorable to the shrine at Delphi, but they demonstrate knowledge of the myth nevertheless. For a discussion of Lucan's Delphic ambivalence, for example, see Stewart Lester, *Prophetic Rivalry* (see n. 9), 121–127; S. Bartsch, *Ideology in Cold Blood: A Reading of Lucan's Civil War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998); B.F. Dick, "The Role of the Oracle in Lucan's de Bello Civili," *Hermes* 93.4 (1965), 460–466.

29 Yarbro Collins, *Combat Myth* (see n. 15), 117–119, 245–252.

30 Callimachus, *Hymn. Apoll.* 97–104; Strabo, *Geogr.* 9.3.10; Lucan, *Pharsalia* 5.79–81.

"Jezebel" ("who calls herself a prophetess")[31] and the second beast ("the false prophet").[32] Subversion of Delphic prophecy would also make sense given John's geographical location. Patmos was near Delos, Didyma, and Claros, all of which housed shrines to Apollo; Delos was also the mythical site of Apollo's birth in the Homeric Hymn.[33] Finally, Rev 9:11 names the angel of the abyss as Ἀπολλύων, which Allen Kerkeslager has taken as a probable reference to Apollo.[34] The larger interest of Revelation in delineating true and false prophecy, the proximity of Patmos to other shrines of Apollo, and the reference to Apollo in Rev 9 reinforce the possibility that John's reworked combat myth could have been heard or read not only as a political critique of Nero, but also as a prophetic critique of Apollo's prophecy at Delphi.

In the longer version of this argument, I contend that actually the two critiques – political and prophetic – should be seen as connected. This is because of the deep embeddedness of Delphic prophecy in Roman politics, and the number of accounts that describe Nero in particular interacting with the shrine: participating in consultations, giving gifts, or lashing out against it in anger. Examples include passages from Suetonius, Dio Cassius, and Pausanias.[35] These narratives vary in historical accuracy[36] and also paint a mixed picture of Nero's relationship with the shrine; the accounts do not all imply that Nero was always supportive of the shrine. And yet Delphi plays significant roles in stories about Nero, as indeed it does in the narratives about many other Hellenistic and Roman rulers.

I thus suggest that John's reworked combat myth in Rev 12 had the rhetorical potential to target not just Nero, but also the Delphic shrine. Delphi was a prestigious prophetic system with which Nero and many other Roman political figures were associated, and it was an integral part of the Apollo-Python combat myth. I read Rev 12 as undermining the origin story for the shrine at Delphi by making Jesus the hero of the story, rather than Apollo. A prophetic critique of Apollo's prophecy at Delphi could, in turn, contribute to a political critique of Rome in John's text, because

31 Rev 2:20: ἡ λέγουσα ἑαυτὴν προφῆτιν.

32 Rev 19:20: ψευδοπροφήτης.

33 C. Koester, *Revelation*, Anchor Yale Bible 38A (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 239; S.J. Friesen, "Myth and Symbolic Resistance in Revelation 13," *JBL* 123.2 (2004), 281–313, at 289 n. 30.

34 Kerkeslager, "Apollo" (see n. 27), 119.

35 Suetonius, *Nero* 40.3; Dio Cassius 62.14.2; Pausanias, *Descr.* 7.1; H.W. Parke and D.E.W. Wormell, *The Delphic Oracle*, vol. 1: *The History* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1956), 283–284.

36 See especially the skepticism of Parke and Wormell, *Delphic Oracle* (see n. 35), 284, about Nero destroying the Delphic shrine in Dio Cassius.

prophecy and politics were so often entangled with one another, and because John's major rhetorical enemy in the book of Revelation was Rome.

3 The Sibylline Oracles and the Prophecy of Apollo

Where Revelation's rivalry with Apollo occurs in the realm of rhetorical potential, portions of the Jewish-Christian Sibylline Oracles adopt a much more direct offensive against Apollo's prophecy.[37] The beginning of Sib. Or. 4 contains the strongest anti-Apollo statement, where the fourth sibyl makes the following introduction for herself:

> I am not an oracle-utterer of false Phoebus, whom vain
> men called a god, and falsely called a prophet,
> but of the great God, whom no hands of men made
> like speechless idols of polished stone.[38]

This sibyl continues to describe how people should interact with her God, who should not be worshipped in a temple (4:6–17), but rather honored by people who reject temples, look to God's glory, and avoid vices such as murder, dishonest gain, and adultery (4:24–39). The sibyl then declares the certainty of God's judgment (4:40–48). After this, she begins an historical review cast as *ex eventu* prophecy, employing layered periodizations of four kingdoms and ten generations, so that generations are parceled out among the different kingdoms (4:49–101). The fourth sibyl describes the rise and fall of the Assyrians, the Medes, the Persians, and the Macedonians, who taken together comprise nine generations. Next, the sibyl prophesies about the rise of Rome, but unlike the previous four kingdoms, Rome receives more sustained attention (4:102–151), and its fall implicitly occurs in the context of a final conflagration that destroys the whole world (4:171–178). The last prophecy of the fourth sibyl describes a resurrection of the dead, after the conflagration; this prediction of resurrection is one of the most notable features of the book, along with its anti-temple polemic at the

37 A longer version of this argument appears in Stewart Lester, *Prophetic Rivalry* (see n. 9), 164–167, 183–184.

38 Sib. Or. 4:4–7: οὐ ψευδοῦς Φοίβου χρησμηγόρος, ὅντε μάταιοι / ἄνθρωποι θεὸν εἶπον, ἐπεψεύσαντο δὲ μάντιν· / ἀλλὰ θεοῦ μεγάλοιο, τὸν οὐ χέρες ἔπλασαν ἀνδρῶν / εἰδώλοις ἀλάλοισι λιθοξέστοισιν ὅμοιον. Greek text follows J. Geffcken, *Die Oracula Sibyllina* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1902). Translations of the Sibylline Oracles are my own, in consultation with J.J. Collins, "Sibylline Oracles," in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. J.H. Charlesworth, vol. 1 (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1983), 317–472.

beginning (4:6–11, 27–30) and an exhortation to baptism immediately before the conflagration (4:162–170).[39]

A couple of introductory words are needed here about Sib. Or. 4, within the Jewish-Christian Sibylline Oracles more generally.[40] The Sibylline Oracles assign prophecies written by Jews and Christians to an ancient "pagan" prophetess, a sibyl. I will discuss some early references to sibyls below, but for now, it is worth noting that many texts describe sibyls as prophets of Apollo.[41] The Sibylline Oracles are pseudepigraphic; each sibyl is a creation of its writers. Scholarly consensus agrees that Jews and Christians produced these texts over hundreds of years, in different times and places, from approximately the second century BCE to the seventh century CE.[42] All of the Sibylline Oracles employ hexameter verse, and they generally combine predictions of destruction with an initially Jewish, then Christian, innovation of sibylline ethical and theological instruction.[43] Scholars date Sib. Or. 4 to approximately 80 CE, and posit at least a two-stage compositional process for the book.[44] Sibylline Oracles 4 demon-

39 Collins, "Sibylline Oracles" (see n. 38), 381–383.

40 For an introduction to these texts, see J. Geffcken, *Komposition und Entstehungszeit der Oracula Sibyllina* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1902); J.J. Collins, *The Sibylline Oracles of Egyptian Judaism*, SBLDS 13 (Missoula, Mont.: SBL, 1974); id., "Sibylline Discourse," in *Apocalypse, Prophecy, and Pseudepigraphy: On Jewish Apocalyptic Literature* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2015), 251–270; D.S. Potter, *Prophecy and History in the Crisis of the Roman Empire: A Historical Commentary on the Thirteenth Sibylline Oracle* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); E. Gruen, "Jews, Greeks, and Romans in the Third Sibylline Oracle," in *Jews in a Graeco-Roman World*, ed. M. Goodman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 15–36; id., *Heritage and Hellenism: The Reinvention of Jewish Tradition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 268–291; R. Buitenwerf, *Book III of the Sibylline Oracles and Its Social Setting: With an Introduction, Translation, and Commentary*, SVTP 17 (Leiden: Brill, 2003); J.L. Lightfoot, *The Sibylline Oracles: With Introduction, Translation, and Commentary on the First and Second Books* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); A.L. Bacchi, "Uncovering Jewish Creativity: Gender & Intertextuality in Book III of the Sibylline Oracles" (PhD diss., Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, 2015).

41 Fontenrose, *Delphic Oracle* (see n. 14), 163.

42 Collins, "Sibylline Oracles" (see n. 38), 317–342.

43 J.J. Collins, "The Jewish Transformation of Sibylline Oracles," in *Seers, Sibyls, and Sages in Hellenistic Roman Judaism*, JSJSup 54 (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 181–197, at 189; id., "Sibylline Discourse" (see n. 38), 252–253; H.W. Parke, *Sibyls and Sibylline Prophecy in Classical Antiquity* (London: Routledge, 1988), 7, 10–11, 12–13; Lightfoot, *Sibylline Oracles* (see n. 40), 8 n. 31, 16–17, 136.

44 D. Flusser, "The Four Empires in the Fourth Sibyl and in the Book of Daniel," *IOS* 2 (1972), 148–175; J.J. Collins, "The Place of the Fourth Sibyl in the Development of the Jewish Sibyllina," *JJS* 25 (1974), 365–380; E. Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ (175 BC–AD 135)*, rev. and ed. G. Vermes, F. Millar, and M. Goodman, vol. 3/1 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1986), 618–653, at 641.

strates knowledge of the eruption of Vesuvius, which is the last datable event in the book, and the addition of protracted material about Rome after the fourth kingdom (at 4:102), without numbering a tenth generation, has led scholars such as David Flusser and John Collins to these conclusions.[45] Sibylline Oracles 4 is a Jewish text, with no Christian interpolations.[46]

The resistance to Apollo here in Sib. Or. 4 can be detected on two fronts. The first is the obvious denigration at the beginning of the book, where the sibyl calls Apollo false (ψευδής, 4:4), and declares that he is neither a god nor a prophet (4:4–5). We can compare this with a similar, if toned-down, sentiment in Sib. Or. 5, where the sibyl declares,

> May I never wish to take the land neighboring Phoebus;
> at some time a hurricane with lightning from above will destroy luxurious Miletus
> because it chose the crafty song of Phoebus
> and the clever practice of men and prudent counsel.[47]

The sibyl's complaint about the "crafty song of Phoebus" (τὴν Φοίβου δολόεσσαν ἀοιδήν, 5:326) and declaration that it will be a source of judgment impugns the legitimacy of Apollo's prophecy, in this instance, probably the shrine at Didyma.[48] In both Sib. Or. 4 and 5, then, the text takes direct aim at the prophecy of Apollo.

This overt resistance to Apollo may have had an explanatory power as well, however, and that possibility illuminates a second, more subtle means of prophetic rivalry with Apollo: the choice of a sibyl in the first place. The fourth sibyl's tirade against Apollo may not just have been prophetic polemic; it may have been an effort at differentiation from other sibyls who were prophets of Apollo. While not all sibyls were associated with Apollo, many texts create links between the god and the prophet.[49] For example, one of the most famous literary sibyls is the prophet of Virgil's *Aeneid*, who is violently inspired by Apollo in book 6.[50] In the second century CE, Pausanias associated sibyls with Apollo in the following description of Delphi:

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45 Flusser, "Four Empires" (see n. 44); Collins, "Fourth Sibyl" (see n. 44).

46 Collins, "Sibylline Oracles" (see n. 38), 381: "There is no trace of Christian redaction in Sibylline Oracles 4."

47 Sib. Or. 5:324–327: μή μ' ἐθέλουσαν ἑλεῖν Φοίβου τὴν γείτονα χώραν· / Μίλητον τρυφερὴν ἀπολεῖ πρηστήρ ποτ' ἄνωθεν, / ἀνθ' ὧν εἵλετο τὴν Φοίβου δολόεσσαν ἀοιδήν / τήν τε σοφὴν ἀνδρῶν μελέτην καὶ σώφρονα βουλήν.

48 On the relationship between Miletus and Didyma, see J. Fontenrose, *Didyma: Apollo's Oracle, Cult, and Companions* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 1–20.

49 Lightfoot, *Sibylline Oracles* (see n. 40), 8; Fontenrose, *Delphic Oracle* (see n. 14), 163.

50 Virgil, *Aen.* 6.77–82.

There is a rock jutting out over the earth; on this, the Delphians say, a woman, standing, would chant oracles; her name was Herophile, surnamed Sibyl. The former [Sibyl], this one, I have found ancient as any, whom the Greeks say was the daughter of Zeus and of Lamia, daughter of Poseidon, and she was the first of women to chant oracles, and they say she was named Sibyl by the Libyans. Herophile is younger than she was, but nevertheless she appeared before the war that happened with Troy, and she foretold Helen clearly in her oracles, that she would grow up in Sparta for the destruction of Asia and Europe, and that Ilium would be conquered on her account by the Greeks. The Delians remembered the hymn of the woman to Apollo. The woman called herself not Herophile alone, but also Artemis in her verses, and the wife of Apollo, and sometimes she says that she is his sister and sometimes his daughter. She represented all these things in poetry while inspired and possessed by the god.[51]

This passage suggests a number of possible relationships between an ancient sibyl and Apollo, including that of wife, sister, and daughter, but it clearly states an understanding that Apollo inspired her prophecy. Finally, an inscription from a cave at Erythrae uses very similar language to that of the opening of Sib. Or. 4: "I am Sibyl, the oracle-utterer, servant of Phoebus."[52] On the basis of surrounding inscriptions that name Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus, Rieuwerd Buitenwerf and others date this inscription to the mid-late second century CE, approximately 160–170.[53] The vehement denial in Sib. Or. 4 that the prophet of this book is inspired by Apollo may have been not only casting aspersions on Apollo, but also countering traditions such as the ones found in Virgil, Pausanias, and the inscription from Erythrae, where other sibyls were inspired by Apollo. These traditions raise the possibility that selecting a sibyl as the pseudepigraphic mouthpiece for these texts was itself a rhetorical act of prophetic rivalry.

51 Pausanias, *Descr.* 10.12.1–2: πέτρα δέ ἐστιν ἀνίσχουσα ὑπὲρ τῆς γῆς· ἐπὶ ταύτῃ Δελφοὶ στᾶσάν φασιν ᾄσαι τοὺς χρησμοὺς <γυναῖκα> ὄνομα Ἡροφίλην, Σίβυλλαν δὲ ἐπίκλησιν. τὴν <δὲ> πρότερον γενομένην, ταύτην ταῖς μάλιστα ὁμοίως οὖσαν ἀρχαίαν εὕρισκον, ἣν θυγατέρα Ἕλληνες Διὸς καὶ Λαμίας τῆς Ποσειδῶνός φασιν εἶναι, καὶ χρησμούς τε αὐτὴν γυναικῶν πρώτην ᾄσαι καὶ ὑπὸ τῶν Λιβύων Σίβυλλαν λέγουσιν ὀνομασθῆναι. ἡ δὲ Ἡροφίλη νεωτέρα μὲν ἐκείνης, φαίνεται δὲ ὅμως πρὸ τοῦ πολέμου γεγονυῖα καὶ αὕτη τοῦ Τρωικοῦ, καὶ Ἑλένην τε προεδήλωσεν ἐν τοῖς χρησμοῖς, ὡς ἐπ' ὀλέθρῳ τῆς Ἀσίας καὶ Εὐρώπης τραφήσοιτο ἐν Σπάρτῃ, καὶ ὡς Ἴλιον ἁλώσεται δι' αὐτὴν ὑπὸ Ἑλλήνων. Δήλιοι δὲ καὶ ὕμνον μέμνηνται τῆς γυναικὸς ἐς Ἀπόλλωνα. καλεῖ δὲ οὐχ Ἡροφίλην μόνον ἀλλὰ καὶ Ἄρτεμιν ἐν τοῖς ἔπεσιν αὑτήν, καὶ Ἀπόλλωνος γυνὴ γαμετή, τοτὲ δὲ ἀδελφὴ καὶ αὖθις θυγάτηρ φησὶν εἶναι. ταῦτα μὲν δὴ μαινομένη τε καὶ ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ κάτοχος πεποίηκεν·

52 R. Cagnat et al., eds., *Inscriptiones graecae ad res romanas pertinentes*, vol. 4 (Chicago: Ares, 1975), no. 1540.1–2: Ἡ Φοίβο[υ π]ρόπολος χρησμηγόρος εἰμὶ Σίβυλλα. For full translation, see Buitenwerf, *Book III* (see n. 40), 118.

53 Buitenwerf, *Book III* (see n. 40), 119–120.

There is thus both direct and indirect resistance to Apollo in Sib. Or. 4. The direct resistance takes the form of a hostile attack against the god at the beginning of the book, as the sibyl introduces herself and denigrates Apollo. This passage demonstrates similarities with other anti-Apollo language in Sib. Or. 5. More indirectly, a comparison with other texts about sibyls shows that the fourth sibyl does not just distance herself from Apollo with a polemic, but also differentiates herself from other sibyls presumed to be Apollo's prophets.

4 Revelation, the Sibylline Oracles, and Revealed History

Having reviewed the arguments from my recent monograph that Rev 12 and Sib. Or. 4 both engage in prophetic rivalry with Apollo, I will now argue that the category of "revealed history" is fruitful for understanding the ways these texts transform ancient traditions. I will first revisit the call of Palmié, Stewart, and Chakrabarty for a broader definition of "history," considering the benefits of their expansive understanding of the term. I will then turn to Hall's use of the term "revealed history," arguing that Rev 12 should be included in this category among the many other examples he considers. Finally, I will discuss what the use of "revealed history" can and cannot do for an analysis of these texts; while it highlights an important shared logic of using revelation to speak about the ancient past, it is not a genre designator, and it should not be taken to smooth out all of the differences between varying accounts about the past.

As I discuss above, Palmié, Stewart, and Chakrabarty all cast a vision for "history" that includes the possibility of nonhuman, superhuman, or divine involvement in the production of knowledge about the past, at least in the understanding of the people who produce such accounts about the past. Palmié and Stewart advocate for the "intrusion of the numinous"[54] from their location as anthropologists and ethnographers; their research and those of the contributors to their journal issue have produced case studies of people groups who understand their knowledge of the past to come from outside of themselves.[55] Although Palmié and Stewart state that they are not going to discuss postcolonial history, they turn, nevertheless, to the postcolonial work of Chakrabarty to critique historicism.[56] One of the

54 Palmié and Stewart, "Introduction" (see n. 2), 212.
55 Palmié and Stewart, "Introduction" (see n. 2).
56 Palmié and Stewart, "Introduction" (see n. 2), 208 n. 2.

significant features of historicism that Chakrabarty critiques is its secularism; he is committed to including gods and spirits in any understanding of humanity as social.[57] With these insights, Palmié, Stewart, and Chakrabarty begin to provide a model for appreciating the ways Revelation and Sib. Or. 4 invoke divine involvement for producing accounts about the past.

Palmié, Stewart, and Chakrabarty are all clear that their understandings of history must be capacious enough to accommodate nonhuman, superhuman, or divine beings. But what does "history" mean in this context, and what kinds of accounts does "history" include? From Palmié and Stewart's abstract, I take their definition of history to be "the acquisition of knowledge about the past, and its social presentation."[58] Several aspects of this definition and their use of it are helpful for reading Revelation and Sib. Or. 4. Palmié and Stewart allow for a number of modes of acquiring that knowledge, as I have discussed above, including revelatory, prophetic, and oracular techniques. Their definition also places an important emphasis on the presentation and reception of accounts about the past in their social contexts. Palmié and Stewart offer a reminder that social groups could receive different kinds of accounts about the past as authoritative. With respect to prophecy in the ancient Mediterranean, for example, if members of a society were accustomed to the belief that gods were a legitimate source of knowledge about the past, the presentation of a divinely revealed past could have carried a great deal of weight for them, even as much as is commonly afforded to the term "history." This is precisely what Hall argues, as I will discuss momentarily.

Turning back first to the question of what kinds of accounts should be included under the label of "history," two characteristics merit consideration here: fragmentary accounts and accounts that blend "myth" and "history." In addition to critiquing the secularism of historicism, Chakrabarty also resists its linearity. He defines historicism as "the idea that to understand anything it has to be seen both as a unity and in its historical development."[59] Chakrabarty here resists linear narratives of evolutionary progress, which creates the possibility that "history" could apply to texts whose presentations of the past are fragmentary and do not present the past as a unity.[60] This, too, is helpful for reading Revelation and Sib. Or. 4, where

57 Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe* (see n. 3), 28.
58 Palmié and Stewart, "Introduction" (see n. 2), 207.
59 Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe* (see n. 3), 21.
60 In describing time as fragmentary here, in addition to being informed by Chakrabarty, I am also influenced by R. Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, trans. K. Tribe (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT, 1985), and W. Benjamin, "Theses on the

there are gaps and breaks in the presentation of time. With respect to Revelation, for example, Yarbro Collins has argued that the child who is taken up to heaven in Rev 12 raises expectations for the audience that are not fulfilled until Rev 19, when a fearful rider on a white horse appears from heaven.[61] This is to say nothing of Revelation's chaotic, sometimes bewildering, imagery and its cycles of visions.[62] While portions of Sib. Or. 4 are more linear than Revelation (including an historical review in Sib. Or. 4:49–101), it is a break and an addition to this periodization that suggested a second stage of redaction to Collins and Flusser: the tenth generation, which was promised earlier in the book and should logically appear during the time of the Macedonians, is never announced. Instead, another kingdom appears, namely Rome, and all discussion of numbered generations vanishes.[63] Expanding "history" beyond linear unity to encompass temporalities that are fragmented creates space for the kinds of accounts about Apollo traditions created by Rev 12 and Sib. Or. 4.

Related to Palmié, Stewart, and Chakrabarty's inclusion of superhuman beings, although distinct from it, is the question of whether myths could be included under the label of "history." If one accepts the definition of Palmié and Stewart above, of history as acquiring knowledge about the past, and the social presentation of that knowledge, this is a capacious enough definition to include myths, which I define as narrative units that appear in multiple cultural contexts. The relationship between myth and history has generated a massive body of scholarship, but for the sake of space, I will limit my discussion to Claude Calame's study of the foundation myths of Cyrene. Calame challenges the notion of progress from mythos to logos in Greek literature, a movement which would associate myths with the primitive or the irrational against the more sophisticated and rational

Philosophy of History," in *Illuminations*, ed. H. Arendt, trans. H. Zohn (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1968), 253–264. Other scholars have applied these notions of time to the study of ancient Judaism: H. Najman, *Losing the Temple and Recovering the Future: An Analysis of 4 Ezra* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), esp. 1–25, has employed Benjamin's notion of rupture as a way of reading varied Jewish reactions to the destruction of the Second Temple. Kosmin, *Time and Its Adversaries* (see n. 13), has insightfully traced themes of rupture and abrupt endings in Seleucid-era texts and material culture. On the whole, my thinking on this point is deeply indebted to the papers, recommended readings, and conversations at "The Sense(s) of History" conference.

61 Yarbro Collins, *Combat Myth* (see n. 15), 127.

62 On the overall structure of the book, see A. Yarbro Collins, *Crisis and Catharsis: The Power of the Apocalypse* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984), 111–116.

63 Flusser, "Four Empires" (see n. 44); Collins, "Fourth Sibyl" (see n. 44).

logos.[64] Calame blurs the lines between history and myth in this study, noting the ways that both are the result of symbolic processes.[65] History and fiction can become intertwined, in Calame's telling, through processes such as the "fictionalization of history" and the "historicization of fiction."[66] Calame views myths as a discourse,[67] and describes how producing a discourse "reformulates events considered to be foundational in order to restore to the community practices of ideological and pragmatic bearing. These re-creations (often speculative) of spaces, narrative reformulations of chronologies, and reasoned configurations of actions create active representations within the culture from which they stem."[68]

Calame's description is apt for understanding the ways that Rev 12 and Sib. Or. 4 transform material about Apollo. Both reformulate foundational traditions about the god, whether that tradition is an origin story for the founding of Delphi or an ancient association between sibyls and Apollo, and they reformulate chronologies by changing the identities of the key players in a narrative. Instead of Apollo as the hero of the combat, it is Jesus in Revelation; instead of Apollo inspiring sibyls, it is the God of the sibylline writers. This undermines some of the ancient prestige of Apollo, as I will argue further below.

Employing this broadened understanding of "history," inclusive of superhuman involvement, fragmentary accounts, and mythic material, we can now turn to the more focused category of "revealed history" used by Hall. He defines revealed histories as "accounts of the past which are based on information received from gods or their messengers."[69] Hall uses "history" fairly loosely (as he himself acknowledges), "to refer to any record or account of events past to the author no matter how mythological or farfetched."[70] Both statements describe the dynamics of Revelation and the Sibylline Oracles, which claim divine inspiration for their presentations of the past, present, and future. Including mythological events from the past coheres nicely with the theoretical conclusions about the intertwining of myth and history from Calame. In Hall's study, this category of revealed

64 C. Calame, *Myth and History in Ancient Greece: The Symbolic Creation of a Colony*, trans. D.W. Berman (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 10–22. See also B. Lincoln, *Theorizing Myth: Narrative, Ideology, and Scholarship* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), esp. 3–18.
65 Calame, *Myth and History* (see n. 64), 30.
66 Calame, *Myth and History* (see n. 64), 30.
67 Calame, *Myth and History* (see n. 64), 29.
68 Calame, *Myth and History* (see n. 64), viii.
69 Hall, *Revealed Histories* (see n. 10), 19.
70 Hall, *Revealed Histories* (see n. 10), 19.

history enables him to track resemblances between texts such as Josephus's *Jewish War*, Jubilees, Judith, 1 Enoch, Apocalypse of Abraham, Daniel, 4 Ezra, Sib. Or. 3–5, the Shepherd of Hermas, the Ascension of Isaiah, the Odes of Solomon, Luke-Acts, and John. He argues compellingly for the pervasiveness of revealed history as a rhetorical strategy in ancient Jewish and Christian texts across the ancient Mediterranean.

When Hall reaches Revelation, however, he opts not to include it in his analysis. While he acknowledges that Revelation speaks about the past, he argues that it is much more interested in the present and the future.[71] Hall even goes as far as to cite Rev 12 as referring to the past, including the birth of the child, who is Jesus.[72] He writes, however, that "to press the imagery into a historical sequence would be to destroy it."[73] At this stage, the contributions of Chakrabarty and Calame become integral for appreciating the rhetorical function of Rev 12. We can speak about Rev 12 offering an account about the past, and understand that function as "history," without conscripting the material into a linear unity or demanding an historical sequence. My analysis of the resonances between Rev 12 and Delphic traditions illuminates that John does not just transform an account about the past in that he writes about the birth of Jesus; he is also actively reformulating traditions about the ancient past, about Apollo's combat with the dragon before the founding of Delphi. In light of the broader definition of history advanced above, and the ancient resonances of Rev 12, I would argue that the chapter belongs within any analysis of "revealed history." It joins Sib. Or. 4 in taking up the rhetorical strategy of revealed history for prophetic rivalry.

Before turning to the implications of revealed history for prophetic rivalry in Revelation and Sib. Or. 4, I would like to discuss briefly what "revealed history" does and does not imply. Hall's study has shown convincingly that organizing texts together under this label demonstrates a meaningful similarity in logic shared across a number of different genres, locations, and time periods. The logic runs as follows: humans cannot understand the universe on their own, and therefore they require divine assistance to comprehend the past, present, and future.[74] Hall's book never claims that revealed history is a genre; rather, it occurs across different genres, including prophetic texts, apocalyptic texts, and even gospels. I concur with Hall here, and this point is worth emphasizing: "revealed

71 Hall, *Revealed Histories* (see n. 10), 126.
72 Hall, *Revealed Histories* (see n. 10), 126.
73 Hall, *Revealed Histories* (see n. 10), 126.
74 Hall, *Revealed Histories* (see n. 10), 12.

history" is not a genre marker, and it is not an attempt to smooth out differences between various accounts about the past. For example, the difference between Revelation's lack of an historical review and the use of an historical review in Sib. Or. 4 should not be overlooked, even as I attempt to track the presence of revealed history in both texts.

In this section, I have considered the category of "revealed history" for understanding Rev 12 and Sib. Or. 4. I have taken up the call issued by Palmié, Stewart, and Chakrabarty for a more expansive understanding of "history," inclusive of divine or superhuman beings, fragmentation, and mythic material, drawing on the work of Calame. I have drawn on Hall for the category of "revealed history," but argued that Revelation should be included under this label, in contrast to Hall's own approach.

5 Revealed History for Prophetic Rivalry

In this final section, I will briefly examine the usefulness of revealed history for prophetic rivalry in Revelation and Sib. Or. 4. The first contribution of revealed history to prophetic rivalry has received attention throughout this paper, namely, undermining earlier traditions about Apollo. Both texts take up ancient traditions and rewrite them, authorized in their presentations by divine revelation. Revelation 12 re-assigns the myth commonly associated with Apollo's founding of Delphi to the birth of Jesus. Sibylline Oracles 4 asserts that its ancient sibyl does not, in fact, belong to Apollo, but rather to the God of sibylline writers; this same sibyl then launches into an historical review, ordering time from the flood until a final conflagration. Both texts have a strong emphasis that their prophecy is true, and that the prophecy of rivals is false prophecy.[75] Sibylline Oracles 4 states explicitly that Apollo's prophecy is false.[76] As Revelation and Sib. Or. 4 claim that their own accounts are true and that rival prophecies are false, while they transform traditions associated with Apollo, they subvert the legitimacy of Apollo's prophecy. While Apollo's prophecy is not the primary rhetorical target of either text, revealed history functions for prophetic rivalry.

Finally, I would suggest a more tentative rhetorical effect of the revealed history in Rev 12 and Sib. Or. 4: subverting the reliability of Apollo as a source of knowledge about the past at all. Revelation and Sib. Or. 4 do not just use prophecy to speak to the past; they use prophecy to create *alter-*

75 Stewart Lester, *Prophetic Rivalry* (see n. 9), 32–41, 164–167.
76 See Sib. Or. 4:4–5; see also 5:326.

native pasts to those narrated by sources favorable to Apollo. Hindy Najman has traced the construction of a divinely-revealed alternative past in her research on 4 Ezra; she argues that the new past in 4 Ezra is a means of recovery after destruction, a "reboot."[77] What I would suggest in the case of Revelation and the Sibylline Oracles is a more polemical version of Najman's "reboot." The texts re-deploy traditions associated with Apollo and change the ancient history of the god, the shrine, and his prophecy, destabilizing their legitimacy in the process.

In so doing, I suggest, Revelation and Sib. Or. 4 could also have been read or heard as undermining the broader prestige of Apollo's prophecy as it, too, spoke about the past. Robert Parker has located Greek oracles on a larger anthropological landscape of divination, noting that frequently divination is concerned not with the future, but with the past and the present.[78] Fontenrose's collection of Delphic oracles has identified numerous pronouncements about the past.[79] Fontenrose classifies the past pronouncements into two types: "Commonplace Statements of Past or Present Fact" and "Extraordinary and Obscure Statements of Past or Present Fact."[80] Fontenrose finds no historical responses of the latter category in his own classificatory system,[81] but for our purposes the historicity of a given response is of little concern.[82] What is more relevant is that there were historical associations between Delphic oracles and the past.

If the transformed traditions about Apollo in Rev 12 and Sib. Or. 4 undermined the ancient legitimacy of the god and his shrine, it is possible they could have been heard or read as subverting the god's authority as a source of knowledge about the past. Regarding Revelation, shaking the foundations of Delphi's origin story could cast doubt on all of its prophetic productions, including oracles that spoke to the past. If the past accounts about the god himself were not reliable, this could add an additional uncertainty about Apollo's reliability to know and represent the past correctly. Regarding Sib. Or. 4, the direct and indirect resistance to Apollo would both have a bearing here. Calling Apollo false and undermining his identity as a god and prophet already calls his ability to speak to past, present, or future

77 Najman, *Losing the Temple* (see n. 60), 1–25, esp. 17.
78 Parker, "Greek States" (see n. 13), 299.
79 Fontenrose, *Delphic Oracle* (see n. 14).
80 Fontenrose, *Delphic Oracle* (see n. 14), 17–18.
81 Fontenrose, *Delphic Oracle* (see n. 14), 18.
82 See also thoughtful challenges to Fontenrose's understanding of authenticity by J. Kindt, "Delphic Oracle Stories and the Beginning of Historiography: Herodotus' Croesus Logos," *CP* 101.1 (2006), 34–51; and L. Maurizio, "Delphic Oracles as Oral Performances: Authenticity and Historical Evidence," *ClAnt* 16.2 (1997), 308–334.

into question. But the transformation of traditions about Apollo and sibyls could have had the same kind of function as Revelation's reworked combat myth. An alternative history of the god, or a polemical reboot, could have rewritten Apollo's legitimacy as well, unseating him as a trustworthy source of knowledge about the past.

Whether or not this last rhetorical possibility was realized, Revelation and the Sibylline Oracles should be seen as participating in the production of revealed histories. As they reveal new ancient histories about Apollo, they employ revealed history for prophetic rivalry.

Olivia Stewart Lester
Loyola University Chicago (USA)
orcid.org/0000-0002-6493-3876